

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice**



Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Oversight Hearing on  
The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Testimony of  
Kevin Donahue  
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Before the  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Charles Allen, Chairperson  
Council of the District of Columbia

June 16, 2020  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
3:00 p.m.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Allen, members, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Kevin Donahue, the Deputy City Administrator and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice.

I want to begin by expressing my deep appreciation for all the employees working at the public safety cluster agencies, both those working behind the scenes and, in particular, those on the front lines. Every hour of every day, our public safety agencies are doing all they can to protect our city. Even in the midst of an unprecedented public health emergency, our public safety personnel are working 24/7 and will always answer the call for help.

I have been in awe at the dedication and commitment by our agencies since the first COVID-19 case in the District. I have been fortunate to meet with a number of our agencies' frontlines staff over the past three months and in every instance, I have been incredibly proud of the work they are doing. I want them to know how much they mean to our city. We often use the term "essential employee," but these public servants are truly essential to our city's successful response and recovery.

Their work has come at a cost. A number of our agencies' employees were hospitalized for COVID-19, some with very serious health complications. And we lost several members of our public safety cluster family.

- Kenneth Moore was a juvenile corrections officer at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services for more than a decade. DYRS Director Clinton Lacey said Mr. Moore's "compassion and commitment to our youth will have a lasting impact on countless youth, families, and DYRS staff."
- A Department of Corrections administrative staffer, whose family has asked for privacy. DOC Director Quincy Booth called this staff member a dedicated 30-year employee who took great pride in helping colleagues, inmates, and visitors.
- Keith Williams was a Metropolitan Police Department officer, most recently serving as a school resource officer in the Third District. MPD Chief Peter Newsham said Officer Williams' "over 30 years of service to the District of Columbia is a testament to his dedication to making a difference in our community."

We also lost two other Metropolitan Police Department officers within days of each other, although neither was due to COVID-19.

- Sergeant Mark Eckenrode at the Metropolitan Police Department was on the force for 23 years. Chief Newsham remembered Sgt. Eckenrode as "a dedicated first line supervisor."
- MPD Sergeant Donna Allen was on the force for more than 30 years. She was remembered by Chief Newsham for her "friendship and good nature."

Because of the public health emergency, we have been unable to publicly celebrate their lives and mourn their loss. Our condolences are with their families, friends, and colleagues.

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On May 18, Mayor Bowser submitted her proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget and financial plan, DC HOPE (Health Opportunity Prosperity Equity). Despite a substantial loss of revenue resulting from the global coronavirus pandemic, the Mayor's proposed budget reflects our ongoing commitment to good government and fiscal responsibility, without compromising our shared DC values. Although this budget is much different than what we had planned to submit in March, it preserves key citywide investments that will allow the District to continue the progress made over recent budget cycles. Most notably, the FY21 budget was able to increase our schools' per pupil funding, maintains significant investments in the Housing Production Trust Fund, increases investments in human services, and avoids mass layoffs of District government employees.

My Office's proposed FY21 budget is \$1,677,597, made up entirely of Local funds, and an authorized FTE count of 11. This is an increase from the approved FY20 budget and funds an additional FTE who will focus exclusively on gun violence prevention.

For the public safety cluster, this was a particularly challenging budget. In creating it, we prioritized preserving core capacity of prior years' investments, while recognizing the broader budget objectives that I just mentioned. I will highlight three key public safety investments in the Mayor's proposed budget.

#### ***Expanding the Police Cadet Program to hire DC residents as police officers***

To continue building a strong pipeline for recruiting DC high school graduates as future law enforcement professionals, Mayor Bowser's FY21 budget invests \$1.7 million to expand the Police Cadet Corps from 100 to 150 positions.

The Police Cadet Program has become a key strategy for recruiting and hiring District residents to serve as police officers, and promoting diversity amongst new hires. In this program, District high school students are given a full scholarship to the University of the District of Columbia, a salaried civilian position at MPD, and when they obtain 60 college credits, they are qualified to attend the Police Academy.

What makes this program an especially valuable part of MPD's recruitment strategy is that the Cadet Corps are all DC residents, nearly every member comes from Wards 7 and 8, and more than half of its graduates are women. We believe community policing is most impactful when police officers are from the community they serve and this program is testament to that.

#### ***Investments in the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement***

The focus of our investments in the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement was, in a difficult budget year, to preserve the Pathways Program and the ONS Leadership Academy.

We were able to maintain the agency's flagship program, the Pathways Program, and are planning for three cohorts in FY21, each class with up to 25 participants. The Pathways Program, which was established nearly two years ago, has served 99 of the District's highest-risk individuals.

ONSE Director Del McFadden will be speaking later today on the program's outcomes, but the impact it is having on participants' lives has been remarkable. In FY20, ONSE began offering on-site vocational programming for Pathways Program participants to help build a bridge between them and employment opportunities. Future ONSE cohorts will be able to benefit from vocational training spaces for both barbering and audio engineering.

Additionally, the FY21 budget preserved funding for the ONSE Leadership Academy at Anacostia High School and, through a \$1 million federal grant, will expand this program to two additional high schools. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education will be the grant recipient and will provide the funding to ONSE through a memorandum of understanding.

I want to address some of the reductions made in my cluster, especially at ONSE and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants. The budget we originally prepared in February for a March submission was quite different than the revised one we prepared in April for a May submission, as we grappled with more than \$1 billion in lost revenue across FY20 and 21. To state the obvious, COVID-19 had a major impact on both on our budget and service delivery. This is especially true of programs that had one-time funding, such as some of ONSE's programs. The reductions you see in the FY21 budget are not reflective of a major shift in philosophy. The Mayor's budgets since FY16 have consistently invested more new enhancements in violence prevention than in enforcement. It simply reflects trade-offs that were needed in a difficult budget year.

***Sustaining FEMS progress by investing in capital investments***

In 2014, the FEMS fleet was in disrepair and insufficient to meeting the District's public safety needs. Through a strong partnership between Mayor Bowser and the Council, we have been able to make consistent investments in the FEMS fleet and its facilities. The impact of this investment is reflected in a larger fleet that can meet the needs of a growing city. It has allowed us to create and maintain a reserve fleet, allowing for more continued maintenance, without decreasing service levels to our city.

Mayor Bowser's proposed FY21 capital budget provides \$23.2 million to purchase 12 ambulances, five engine trucks, two ladder trucks, one rescue squad vehicle, and assorted command vehicles. This investment, along with the delivery of vehicles throughout the rest of this calendar year that were purchased in previous fiscal years, will put the FEMS fleet in its most stable situation over the past decade.

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Chairperson Allen, I want to be mindful of your time limits, so I will conclude my testimony. I am immensely proud of the work done by all agencies in the public safety cluster. The past few months have been some of the most challenging times that any of us have faced in our careers. I believe the men and women in our agencies have performed magnificently. We are incredibly fortunate to work with so many exceptionally dedicated public servants.

Thank you for your support of our agencies' critical mission. I look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to make our city better. My staff and I are available to answer your questions.